

TOWN OF MANSFIELD
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 10, 2011
MANSFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

Town Clerk Mary Stanton called the Annual Town Meeting for Budget Consideration to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Mansfield Middle School Auditorium. The Town Clerk read the Notice and Warning of the Meeting and explained the eligibility requirements for voting. She then requested nominations for Moderator.

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson nominated Carol Pellegrine to serve as Moderator. Hearing no other nominations the nominations were closed. Motion to approve Mrs. Pellegrine as Moderator passed unanimously.

Mrs. Pellegrine outlined the rules of debate for the meeting. Without objection Town Clerk Mary Stanton was appointed secretary to the meeting. A motion to follow Roberts Rules of Order was approved without objection. Mrs. Pellegrine requested that citizens limit their comments to five minutes.

Mrs. Pellegrine recognized Mayor Elizabeth Paterson who thanked her fellow Council members and Town staff for their work on the budget. The Mayor complimented the members of the Council on their willingness to work together in this endeavor, commenting that while members did not always agree they were always respectful of one another's opinions. She described the budget as a prudent document that maintains current programming while being cognizant of the economic times. Mayor Paterson thanked both the members of the Board of Education and the administration for their efforts to keep taxes low. Mayor Paterson introduced the Chair of the Council Finance Committee Bill Ryan and Mansfield Board of Education Chair Mark LaPlaca to present a more detailed explanation of the budget.

Councilor Ryan briefly reviewed the General Fund noting that this was a particularly difficult budget season given the economic situation and the turmoil in the state budget process. The budget presented to residents is a current services budget for a reasonable amount of money. Mr. Ryan highlighted the general government expenditure trends and cost drivers.

Board of Education Chair Mark LaPlaca described the Board's budget as one that maintains all current services and classroom enrollment size while actually decreasing the size of the overall budget for the third year in a row. Mr. LaPlaca thanked Superintendent Fred Baruzzi for his leadership and acknowledged the Board for their work.

Mr. Ryan reviewed highlights of the Revenue Fund, the Capital Fund and the Capital Non-recurring Fund. In summary Mr. Ryan noted the tax impact on the average single family residence would be an increase of about .97 mills or about a \$164 tax increase for the year. Mr. Ryan reminded those present that they have the ability to approve, raise or lower programs in the budget.

Mr. Ryan offered the following resolutions for consideration:

RESOLVED: That the proposed General Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 in the amount of \$34,401,920 which proposed budget was adopted by the Council on April 19, 2011 be adopted and that the sums estimated and set forth in said budget be appropriated for the purpose indicated.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-51, the proportionate share for the Town of Mansfield of the annual budget for Regional School District No. 19 shall be added to the General Fund Budget appropriation for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 and said sums shall be paid by the Town to the Regional School District as they become available.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital Projects Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 in the amount of \$2,154,000 be adopted provided that the portion proposed to be funded by bonds or notes shall, at the appropriate times, be introduced for action by the Town Council as required by Section 407 of the Town Charter.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital and Non-Recurring Reserve Fund Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 in the amount of \$1,006,000 be adopted.

Moderator Carol Pellegrine requested comments.

Virginia Raymond, Maple Road, thanked the Town Council and Board of Education for their hard work but expressed her concerns with the current economic times and the uncertainty at the state level. Ms. Raymond offered a list of amendments for the Council to consider which she believes will bring the mil increase to zero. The reductions would total \$998,000 and be comprised of a reduction of \$883,000 in the Capital Fund, \$100,000 from the General Fund and \$65,000 from the Capital Non-Recurring Fund. She suggested the South Eagleville walkway be postponed. The motion was seconded.

John Roulier, Fellen Road, expressed the same concerns as Ms. Raymond and thanked the teachers for their zero increase. Mr. Roulier offered a friendly amendment to postpone action on the budget until state aid is determined.

Moderator Carol Pellegrine ruled that the offered friendly amendment is out of the realm of the ability of the Town Meeting.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, spoke in support of the reductions commenting that these reductions would force the Council to reconsider the areas of expenditures proposed in the budget. He is in favor of a zero increase.

Bruce Clouette, Woodland Road, asked that the motion to amend be withdrawn or ruled out of order. The Charter allows for the approval, lowering or raising of any program funding, not bottom lines.

The Moderator, after consultation with the Town Attorney, ruled the motion to amend out of order.

Virginia Raymond, Maple Road, moved to reduce the Public Safety Capital Program Budget by \$210,000. The motion was seconded.

Councilor Toni Moran commented the ambulance was the subject of much debate in the deliberations of the Council. The proposed amendment would not decrease the mil rate but would be a decrease in the Capital Fund. Ms. Moran stated that ambulances generate income for the Town and this purchase is part of the schedule for Public Safety equipment.

Mike Sikoski, Wildwood Road, commented that based on his research an ambulance should cost about \$150,000. He is in support of the amendment.

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, attended numerous Council meetings, listened to the Fire Chief's rationale for the purchase of an ambulance and is in opposition to the amendment to postpone the purchase.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, spoke in favor of the motion. Ms. Wassmundt does not believe that the ambulance would generate revenue and is convinced that additional personnel would be needed to support the additional ambulance.

Bob Bockholdt, Middle Turnpike agreed with the motion to postpone the purchase.

The Moderator asked for a voice vote and ruled the motion failed. The decision was challenged and in a standing vote the motion failed. The vote was 69 in favor and 114 opposed.

Peter Plante, Oak Drive, expressed his desire to reduce the Public Works budget by postponing the South Eagleville walkway. Mr. Plante moved to reduce the Public Works Capital Fund Program Budget by \$400,000. The motion was seconded.

Matt Proser, Sycamore Drive, spoke against the motion to amend noting the project has already been postponed for six years and it is not an aesthetic issue but one of safety.

David Freudmann, Eastwood Road, is familiar with the area and is concerned that the walkway would not be utilized by a sufficient number of people.

Diedre Goodrich, Westwood Road, spoke against the amendment saying that a large number of seniors live in the area and that many people would benefit from the walkway once the Storrs Center becomes a reality.

Paulette Marie, Willowbrook Road, is against the motion to amend and believes that more people would walk if sidewalks were available, resulting in less vehicles on the roadways.

Bob Kremer, 67 Charles Lane, spoke against the amendment and expressed his concerns that South Eagleville Road is heavily traveled by pedestrians; vehicles travel at a high rate of speed and a number of accidents have occurred in the area making this a safety issue.

Richard Pellegrine, Clover Mill Road, supports the amendment, on a number of occasions seniors have expressed to him that the existing path be reconditioned.

Nancy Tomastik, Maple Road, expressed that sidewalks are nice to have but due to the current economy feels this is an extravagant expenditure and therefore supports the motion.

Tom Birkenholz, South Eagleville Road, voiced his concerns regarding the amount and speed of the traffic on the road making it a safety issue. Mr. Birkenholz does not support the amendment.

Bob Bockholdt, Middle Turnpike, supports the motion and feels the expenditure should be re examined.

Jane Blanshard, Sycamore Drive, spoke against the motion stating the sidewalk is needed.

Don Curtis, Separatist Road, supports striking the motion and believes the sidewalk would ameliorate any safety issues.

Carla Kelly, Middle Turnpike, commented that there are numerous sidewalk concerns in Town, but due to a tight budget this year the project should be postponed.

Betty Gardner, Foster Drive, stated passage of the amendment would not affect the mil rate as the expenditure is a capital project.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, remarked the walkway is not a safety issue and if Glen Ridge residents want to get to the Senior Center an alternative route is available.

A motion to call the question was made, seconded and passed by two-thirds of those present.

The Moderator asked for a voice vote and ruled the motion failed. The decision was challenged and in a standing vote the motion failed with 71 voting in favor and 116 opposed.

A motion to call the question was made, seconded and passed by two-thirds of those present.

The Moderator called for a vote on the appropriations as presented.

The vote was by paper ballot.

Those in favor were 163 and 77 were in opposition. The budget passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk